

## Tips for Writing an Effective Success Story<sup>1</sup>

Your stories may be used by the Iowa Department of Public Health to respond to various requests on the impact of your programming and use of state funds.

Stories can also be used as tools when meeting with coalition and key decision makers.

Success Stories are due quarterly. These are suggested steps to consider for developing your success stories:

1. Start early

Keep in mind the goals for your objective and what activities you will be doing throughout the year (planning, implementing, maintaining). The beginning part of the grant year usually involves organizing data, planning outreach, developing materials and presentations and training staff on the objective. As the year progresses, outreach to the community, with some successes and failures, intensifies. Use these activities to determine what your story should include. Do not be afraid to include barriers and things you learned, which influence your activities on that objective.

2. Develop a Plan

- a. Create a system for collecting good information
- b. Use a data template, see this resource, pages 30-32:  
[http://www.cdc.gov/oralhealth/publications/library/pdf/success\\_story\\_workbook.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/oralhealth/publications/library/pdf/success_story_workbook.pdf).
- c. Identify staff responsible for collecting, organizing, analyzing and writing the stories.
- d. Establish timelines
- e. Be sure to plan how you will share your stories to your communities as well as a part of your Progress Reports

3. Identify the Story

Keep in mind where you are in implementing activities for your objective.

Planning – your programming is in the early stages and stories will tend to focus on process and short-term outcomes.

Implementing – programming is up and running and stories can highlight how your program is received in the community, partners identified and progress toward your stated goal.

Maintenance – Effects of your program are identifiable. An outcome may not be the adoption of policy but possibly gaining a key partner for your programming.

4. Know your Audience

Though success stories are required as your quarterly progress reports, your stories should also be addressed to people and groups in your community(s). Such as:

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<sup>1</sup> Tips for Writing an Effective Success Story: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:  
[http://www.cdc.gov/oralhealth/state\\_programs/success-story-tips.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/oralhealth/state_programs/success-story-tips.htm)

- a. Policy makers
  - b. Civic, community and healthcare organizations
  - c. Major businesses
  - d. Coalition members
  - e. Youth Chapter members
5. Use this Suggested Format  
This format will help provide guidance and help organize the information.
  - a. Title – should capture the overall message of the story
  - b. Public Health Problem – describe the problem being addressed and why it is important. Use data but don't provide too many numbers
  - c. Program Example – describe the program or activity being implemented
  - d. Implication – identify short-term, intermediate or long-term outcomes that demonstrate how your program or activity affects health impacts
  - e. Contact Information – if you can, get approval to include organizational general contact information as well as the name of a specific contact person
6. Promote your Program and Work  
Along with sending your success stories to IDPH, they can be used to:
  - a. Educate decision makers about the impact of your program
  - b. Show movement in program progress when planned outcomes may not be realized until the future
  - c. Attract new partners for collaboration
  - d. Share best practices
  - e. Provide evidence to garner more support and resources
7. Submit your Success Stories quarterly through [lowagrants.iowa.gov](http://lowagrants.iowa.gov)  
The quarterly progress report will have a section devoted to your success story, which is an activity for each objective in your Action Plan

8. Use these Success Story Resources

Impact and Value: Telling your Program's Story:

<http://www.cdc.gov/oralhealth/publications/library/success-stories-wkbk.htm>

WISEWOMAN Works: A Collection of Success Stories:

[http://www.cdc.gov/wisewoman/success\\_stories.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/wisewoman/success_stories.htm)

Here is a Sample Success Story Data Collection Tool. It is a tool, not a requirement to use for the Community Partnership tobacco grant.

<b>Success Story Data Collection Tool</b>	
<b>Program Information</b>	
<b>Success Story Item</b>	<b>Your Answer</b>
<b>Contact name:</b>	
<b>Contact information:</b>	Address:  Email: Office number: Cell phone:
<b>Employer/Organization name:</b>	
<b>Focus of the Story</b>	
<b>Proposed Title of the Success Story:</b> This should include your program's name and grab the attention of your audience.	
<b>Focus/Theme of the story:</b> Focus might be on collaboration with partners, a community prevention initiative, advocacy efforts, using data to engage stakeholders, etc.	
<b>Point of view:</b> The story should be from the perspective of those who benefited from the program: a participant, family member, friend, etc.	
<b>Audience(s):</b> Who is the intended audience for the story?	
<b>The public health/community need for this program:</b>	
<b>Background of the Story</b>	
<b>Time period of achievement:</b>	
<b>Location of the story:</b>	
<b>Program target group:</b>	
<b>Name and contact information of one participant to interview:</b>	Contact Information: Name: Address:  Telephone Number:
<b>How did you accomplish your success?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What actions did you perform?</li> <li>• Who was involved?</li> <li>• How long did it take to accomplish?</li> <li>• Estimated costs and funding source(s).</li> <li>• Partners involved (would they be willing to include their logo in a one-page document?)</li> </ul> <i>Think in terms of replication. What would your audience need to know to replicate your program?</i>	
<b>Environmental context and barriers to success:</b> What is the background of your program (context)? What barriers to success did you face and how did you overcome them?	
<b>Key results or implications of success:</b> Describe your most important results either at the participant, program, community, or environmental level.	

<p><b>Quote from a participant:</b> Do you have any specific quotes from participants or partners that would support this story? Please include the full contact information for the person(s) being quoted and a signed release form.</p>	<p><b>Yes</b> <b>No</b></p> <p><b>Contact Information:</b>  Name:  Address:   Telephone Number:</p>
<p><b>Program impact:</b> Since the program was implemented, how is life different for program recipients? (Changes in culture/norms, organizations, and behavior; increased access to proven prevention practice or new product, etc.)  What is the estimated number of people who have benefited from the program?  Were there any (unintended) results that surprised you?</p>	
<p align="center"><b>Implications of the Story</b></p>	
<p><b>Next steps:</b>  What are the next steps that need to be taken to further or continue this effort?</p>	
<p><b>Lessons learned:</b>  What were the key elements that made this a success?  What would you do differently?</p>	
<p align="center"><b>Publication Information</b></p>	
<p><b>Do you have a photo?</b> Please attach photo (jpg file) and consent form.</p>	<p><b>Yes</b> <b>No</b></p>
<p><b>Do you have a program logo?</b></p>	<p><b>Yes</b> <b>No</b>  <i>If yes, please include an electronic copy with your submission.</i></p>

By submitting this form, I am agreeing to allow **(insert program name here)** to use this information to develop a success story that can be used in community presentations and/or in written forms of communication. I have reviewed all of the information above.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Title**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

**Office Use Only**

Date Submitted: \_\_\_\_\_  
Draft 1 Submitted to Program: \_\_\_\_\_  
Feedback from Program Received: \_\_\_\_\_  
Draft 2 Submitted to the Program: \_\_\_\_\_